

GROWTH GUIDE

DATE: FEB 5, 2023

SERMON TITLE: GRATITUDE & GLORY

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 3:14-21 (NIV)

The Author

For a brief time at the end of his second missionary journey, and then for more than two years on his third missionary journey, Paul ministered to the church at Ephesus. During his time in this city that housed the famous temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, Paul saw many converted to faith in Jesus Christ and many others who opposed his preaching in the synagogues and homes.

Key Places and People

Paul, Ephesus, Tychicus, Onesimus,
Roman prison

Repeating Terms

Christ, faith, love, holy, fullness, power,
glory

Cross Reference(s)

Phil 2:10, Eph 1:10, Rom 9:23, John 14:23, Job 11:18, John 1:16, Rom 8:23, Rom 16:25, Rom 11:36, Eph 4:1

Theme

Paul divided his letter to the Ephesians into two clear segments; applying the truths of the first makes possible the actions and lifestyle of the second. Paul discusses God's creation of a holy community by His gift of grace in Jesus Christ. The members of this community have been chosen by God through the work of Christ, adopted as sons and daughters of God, and brought near to the Father through faith in His Son.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between being thankful and grateful? How would Paul have responded to this question? Are we more grateful for the past, present, or our future? Why?
2. Why did Paul use "kneel"? How can we derive our name from God?
3. Who is Paul praying for in verse 16? Why did he need to exhort (prod) believers? What does his prayer in verse 16-18 mean to you? What do these verses mean for the church?
4. Can love be measured? How big is Christ's love in your mind? How would you describe the width, depth, breath of His love to a new believer?
5. How do faith and love surpass knowledge? What produces faith? What does faith create?
6. Have you ever known someone filled to the measure with the fullness of God? What stood out about that person?
7. Can you think of a time God did more than you could ask or imagine? What does this say about us? What does this say about the nature and character of God?
8. Verse 20 says his power is "at work within us." What power? Why do we need it? What is God trying to accomplish?
9. What does "glory in the church" mean in verse 21? How should we demonstrate glory in the church? What examples of "glory" would a visitor to MTUMC see? Is there such a thing as too much glory?

GROWTH GUIDE

DATE: FEB 12, 2023

SERMON TITLE: LAUGH

SCRIPTURE: ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 4 (NIV); PSALM 16:11 (NIV); PHILIPPIANS 4:4 (NIV)

The Author

With Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes, we know it had to have been written sometime before his death in 931 BC. The content of Ecclesiastes reflects someone looking back on a life that was long on experience but short on lasting rewards. As king, he had the opportunity and resources to pursue the rewards of wisdom, pleasure, and work in and of themselves. Yet the world-weary tone of the writing suggests that late in life, he looked back on his folly with regret, pointing us to a better, simpler life lived in light of God's direction (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Repeating Terms

Time, season, pleasure, joy, rejoice

Cross Reference(s)

Ecc 3:17, Ecc 8:6, Romans 12:15, Psalm 30:11, Psalm 126:2.

Theme

Ecclesiastes presents us a naturalistic vision of life—one that sees life through distinctively human eyes—but ultimately recognizes the rule and reign of God in the world. This more humanistic quality has made the book especially popular among younger audiences today, men and women who have seen more than their fair share of instability in life but who still cling to their hope in God.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some "seasons" of life? How do you know you are moving from one season to another? Do some seasons last longer than others? Why? What response does God require or expect from us when we are a season? What advice do we give others about seasons? Does it seem some people are only in our lives for a season?
2. In verses 1 and 4, why are sad facets opposite to happy facets? What is God trying to tell us?
3. How can we as believers not allow our external circumstances determine our inner peace? Can joy be created or intensified? Why are we called to pursue joy in Christ? What if we don't?
4. In Psalm 16:11, how can life be enjoyed both now and in eternity? Is the present moment a gift? Why? How is being aware of God's presence the "fullness of joy?" Do you have that today?
5. Peter also quoted this passage in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. How are we rewarded for Jesus' work on the cross? How was Jesus, the Son, rewarded for His work on the cross?
6. Why did God fill His earth "full of pleasures?" Can you name them? Why do we often overlook them?
7. Phil 4:4 says "rejoice." Are joy and happiness related? Do they have the same source? the same effect? Can they happen at different times? Which one lasts? Why?
8. Why does God make delight a duty for us? Who benefits? How can we achieve this each day?

GROWTH GUIDE

DATE: FEB 19, 2023

SERMON TITLE: A FIRM FOUNDATION

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 7:24-27 (NIV); 1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-11 (NIV)

The Author

Matthew's name appears in all the biblical lists of the twelve apostles. His history as a tax collector distinguished him from the other apostles, and immediately after his call to follow Jesus—Matthew hosted a feast for Jesus in his home with an invitation made up of Matthew's sinful friends. Apparently he did not think it odd that Jesus and he would associate with the downtrodden of society.

Paul had been in Ephesus for more than two years on his third missionary journey when he received a disturbing report of quarreling within the **Corinthian** church, a situation that required immediate action. Paul penned his letter in AD 55, just as he was planning to leave Ephesus for Macedonia.

Repeating Terms

Rock, house, builder, seed, water, plant, foundation

Theme

Matthew's extensive connections between Jesus and the Old Testament provide ample prophetic evidence for Jesus's ministry but also give contemporary readers a glimpse into how first-century readers approached the Old Testament with a Christ-centered mind-set.

1 Corinthians is a discussion of the church and the issues that people in the 1st century faced. The church was corroded with sin on a variety of fronts, so Paul provided a model for how the church should handle sin. Rather than turn a blind eye toward division and immorality, he addressed the problems head on. In his bold call to purity within the church, Paul made it clear that he was willing to risk the good opinion of some in order to help cleanse the sin that tainted the church.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some major storms in life people have to endure? Why do you think scripture mentioned how rain, floods, and winds each behaved separately? Why didn't Jesus just put them all together in one word and say "storms?" Are all storms external or visible? Why?
2. Why does Jesus say we need to prepare ahead of time for a trial?
3. Where did your foundation come from? How do believers build a strong foundation? Is a foundation a one time event? How does a church build a strong foundation? Is it a one time event for a church?
4. According to scripture, what will be our final or ultimate test? Who decided that outcome?
5. In verse 26, did the second builder actively seek out a faulty foundation? If the builder's fault was not an error in judgement, then what was it?
6. Which was worse for the builder: losing the house in the storm or dealing with the disappointment and cleanup in the aftermath? Do you think the builder blamed himself, a faulty foundation, or the storm?
7. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-6, why does God assign different people different jobs? Why do we become frustrated because we want to water when God has called us to plant?
8. Who is responsible for the increase? When does real fruitfulness in ministry (your calling) happen?
9. How do we get each other to see we are all working toward the same goal?
10. How are you being called to work in God's field or on God's building? How can the church help/support?